

CLINICAL RESEARCH CENTRE

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CLINICAL RESEARCH CENTRE LABORATORIES,
NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR MEDICAL RESEARCH,
MILL HILL, LONDON, N.W.7.

20th October, 1969

Dear Professor Lederberg,

I am collecting material for a publication on the role of reason and empirical observation in scientific discovery. My belief is that the extremists who emphasize the one or the other are wrong: there is a constant interplay. What I am trying to do is found out from people who made important discoveries what actually happened.

If you have described anywhere how yours were made, I should be glad to receive a reprint or reference. Otherwise I hope you can find a little time - amidst all your activities - to send me a short account. I have already managed to assemble quite a good collection of recent examples of important chance discoveries, including those on immunological tolerance, the accidental discovery of polynucleotide phosphor-ylase during the course of work on oxidative phosphorylation, and the observation that components were still separated on a starch column when the electric current was accidentally turned off so that there was no electrophoresis - which led to Sephadex and other forms of gel filtration. They make an amusing and instructive group. If you can think of other examples, please let me know. I can obtain the details from those involved.

With kind regards,

*Yours sincerely,
A.C. Allison*

A.C. Allison

*D+↓ scientific discovery
serendipity
creativity*

AUG 2 1974

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